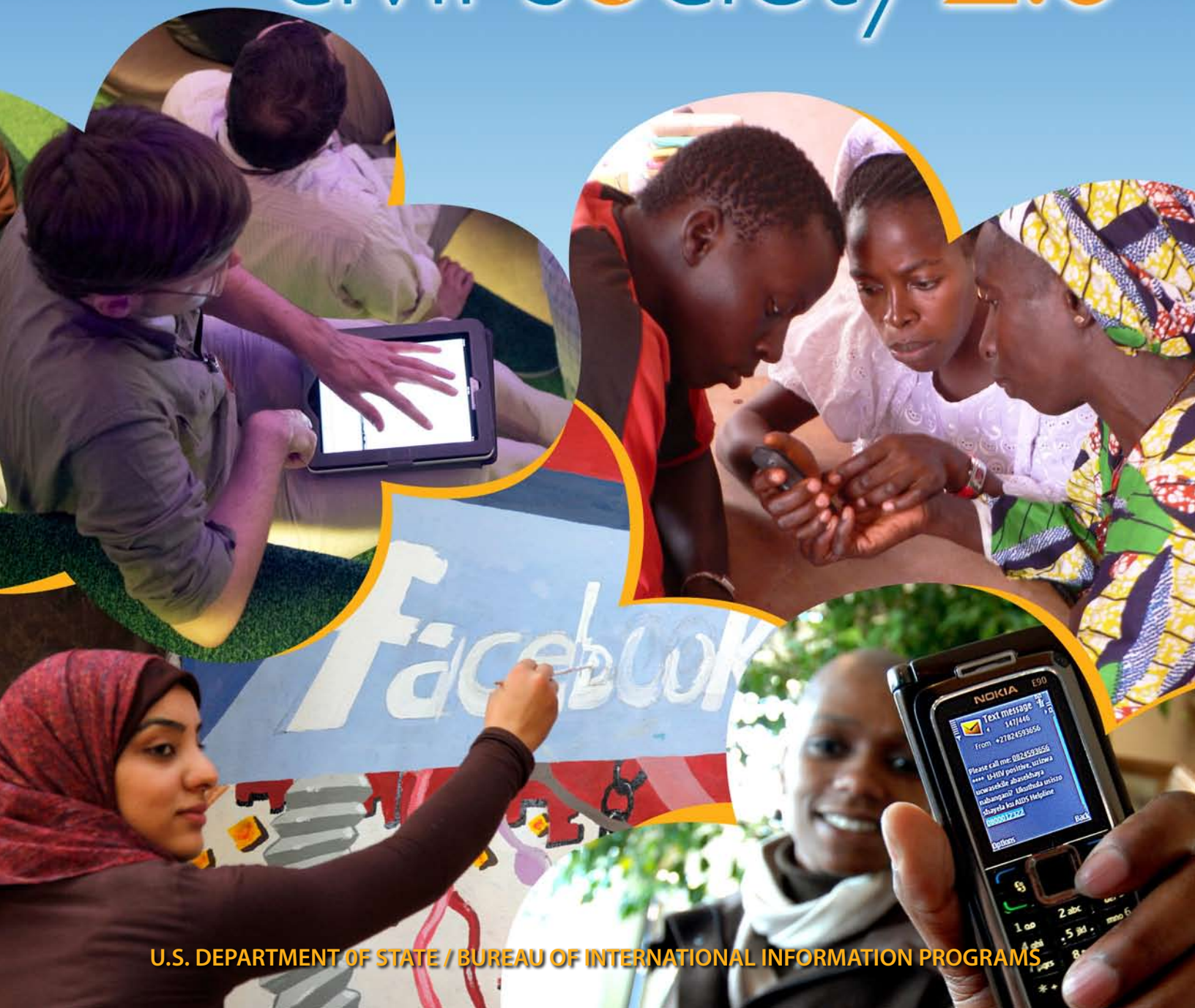
eJOURNAL USA

# CULTIVATING civil society 2.0

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# About This Issue

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Civil society organizations used social media sites to organize social movements, such as the spring 2011 protests in Cairo, Egypt.

Courtesy photo/Tostan Jokko

Mobile phones are a versatile tool. Their uses range from reporting acts of violence to reminding AIDS patients to visit the doctor.

Civil society consists of organizations and institutions that help and look after people, their health and their rights. The work of civil society groups complements the efforts of governments and the private sector. Whether the goal is as local as building a new school or as global as stemming the spread of HIV/AIDS, civil society is a vital player and essential partner.

As more and more people around the world have gained access to computers, phones and other mobile communications devices, civil society organizations have kept pace. Civil society is pioneering the use of so-called "connection technologies" (for example, mobile phones, mapping applications and social-networking software) to improve health, promote transparency, advance human rights and uphold justice. Connection technologies are limited only by the ingenuity of their users. Increasingly, civil society groups are using technology in unprecedented ways to carry out their work and expand the sphere in which they operate.

This issue of *eJournal USA* explores the evolving intersection between civil society and technology and offers examples of how civil society organizations are exploiting technology's potential to give a voice to the voiceless and homes to the homeless. ■

*The Editors*

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# Civil Society: The People's Power

Ingrid Srinath

Within every border, across every country, exists a multitude of separate silenced voices." Those are the words above my desk at CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation. They serve as a daily reminder of the daunting challenge and tremendous opportunity civil society presents today.

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In front of the National Congress in Brasilia, students from across Brazil demonstrate against sexual violence. Civil society results when individuals come together to pursue a common goal.

Civil society organizations — which include nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), social movements, media outlets, think tanks, faith-based charities, trade unions and community-based organizations — help ensure representation of *all* voices by standing up for those who are passed over by government and the private sector.

Civil society complements the efforts of governments and the private sector by finding innovative solutions to the complex issues facing us across all sectors, including health, education, justice, the economy, arts, technology and governance. In fact, the relative independence from both electoral and market cycles that much of civil society enjoys permits organizations the freedom to pursue issues and solutions that are unpopular or long term. But most important, civil society groups at the local, national and international levels independently evaluate whether the needs of their communities are being met — and hold government and private industry to account when they are not.

In many instances where governmental and private services do not or cannot meet all the needs of their constituents, civil society organizations endeavor to fill the gaps. History demonstrates the importance of civil society in sustaining vibrant communities — both within and across borders.

## A Global Force

Today, discussions of "civil society" have become increasingly popular in political, business and media circles around the world. Many definitions have been proposed, but at its essence, civil society is the result of individuals beyond family, state or commerce coming together across cultures and geographies to pursue common goals. Civil society actors range from neighborhood groups and faith-based initiatives to professional NGOs and global alliances.

Previous page: With the help of a radio, this Pashtun man can listen to the loya jirga, a grand council of Afghan tribal elders, who meet to discuss and settle national affairs in Kabul, Afghanistan.

Pakistanis in Karachi hold a rally against terrorism. Civil society helps find solutions to today's global challenges.

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Volunteers for Habitat for Humanity, a non-profit that builds houses for those in need, frame a house in Detroit, Michigan. Civil society unites people of different backgrounds and beliefs to work for the common good.

The goals of civil society can be equally diverse, ranging from local projects to clean up roads or build new schools to global initiatives to end climate change or achieve world peace.

Almost every great advance in human rights and freedoms has its origins in civil society. Past civic achievements include strengthening democratic governance; abolishing slavery; defending rights to information and free expression; establishing legal protections against discrimination for minorities, women, children, workers and the disabled; as well as cooperating across national borders on issues ranging from aid disbursement to foreign relations, communication and the control of deadly diseases.

> "Progress in the 21st century depends on the ability of individuals to coalesce around shared goals and harness the power of their convictions."
>
> *— Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, July 3, 2010*

When small groups of ordinary men and women place collective goals above narrow self-interest, they become capable of extraordinary accomplishment.

## Speaking Truth to Power

As citizens have demonstrated their growing capacity to mobilize for their rights and freedoms, in some nations the powerful elites whose dominance they challenge have struck back. Over the past decade, some governments have curtailed the freedoms on which civil society thrives — freedom of expression, freedom of association and assembly and freedom of information — under the guise of bolstering national or economic security.



Legislative, fiscal and technological measures, as well as repression, smear campaigns, surveillance, abduction, torture and assassinations, have been deployed by governments and vested interests to restrict these freedoms and prevent civil society from discharging its important watchdog role.

## Adaptable Actor in an Evolving World

As citizens reclaim their right to shape the decisions that determine their lives and futures, the social contracts among state, market, media and civil society of the late 20th century are being renegotiated. The status quo in established and emerging democracies, as well as in authoritarian regimes, is being challenged by citizens and civil society groups seeking greater accountability and transparency in governance. At the same time, globalized economics, climate change, crimes against humanity and threats from pandemics and terrorism demand the attention of citizens and civil society. Finding just, peaceful and sustainable solutions to these challenges requires the help of civil society.

By bridging divides, breaking isolation and amplifying silenced voices, civil society can ensure legitimacy, transparency and accountability at all levels of governance and society. ■

*Ingrid Srinath is secretary-general of CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, a global alliance of civil society organizations dedicated to strengthening citizen action and civil society throughout the world, especially in areas where participatory democracy and citizens' freedom of association are threatened.*

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*The opinions expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. government.*

© AP Images/Amr Nabil

Members of "Respect Yourself", an anti-sexual harassment group in Egypt gather to organize their campaign in Cairo. Civil society helps amplify marginalized voices in society.

# Global Village to Grass Roots: Digital Media's Civic Potential

Douglas Rushkoff

© AP Images/Elizabeth Dalziel

Traditional electronic media created the global village; digital media put a global spotlight on the local.

© AP Images/Paul Sakuma

As large-scale production replaced locally produced goods, manufacturers used branding, such as the Quaker Oats logo, to replace the human face of local merchants.

To many, the rise of the Internet in the early 1990s appeared to be a simple extension of the electronic media that came before. A world already flooded with everything from Coke and McDonalds to Bill Cosby and *Baywatch* would soon be overrun by even more Western corporate imagery and interests. The inaugural issue of *Wired* magazine proclaimed a "tsunami" was on the way (presumably traveling from West to East) and would soon overtake us all.

But digital media didn't turn out to behave quite like this. Its impact on global and national affairs has been less a wave crashing down upon us than a slow, steady rise from below. This is because digital technology is different. It's as different from traditional electronic media — such as radio and television — as the printing press was different from handwritten manuscripts, or the written alphabet was from the spoken word.

Media theorist Marshall McLuhan coined the term "global village" to describe the electronic media universe unfolding before him in the 1960s. Decades before the anti-globalization protests of the mid-1990s, McLuhan realized that the emerging global village would be subject to globalism of all kinds: the power of nation states and local interests would wane as that of global corporations increased.

Digital technology brings media back into our own hands. We are no longer merely consumers of media: We are media producers.

### Look Who's Talking: Electronic vs. Digital Media

Electronic broadcast media was an outgrowth of the Industrial Age. New, large-scale producers developed branding to entice customers away from familiar products. By printing a Quaker on a box of oats, or a cartoon character on a box of cereal, these manufacturers used branding to substitute for the human face of a local merchant. Radio and television were then employed to broadcast brand images across the United States and the world, so that consumers would develop relationships with brands as they once had with local vendors. As a consequence, local allegiances gave way to regional, national and then global brands and associations. In a similar fashion, markets delocalized along with economies, jobs and even values. As McLuhan predicted, the former village became global.

Electronic media created a conversation between central broadcasters and the world at large. Those who controlled the communications tower controlled the conversation. In the best of circumstances, we could "respond" to the politicians or producers on-screen through our votes and purchases. In the worst of circumstances, electronic media's inability to maintain two-way conversation silenced its audience into passive consumerism.

By contrast, digital media fosters interaction by providing new avenues for communication. By allowing us to register our likes and dislikes, email directly and blog our discontent, it fosters a two-way pattern of call and response.

Previous page: On the tenth anniversary of the 1989 Tiananmen Square democracy rally, a man captures a digital snapshot of a flag being raised in the square in Beijing

©Rommel DeGuzman

Unlike television, radio and other electronic media, digital media encourage multi-way dialogue from person to person.

### Person to Person: The "Social" in Social Media

More important, while traditional electronic media pushed us all toward more global activities and sensibilities, digital media is pushing us quite the other way. Digital media not only promotes feedback from the masses to corporations and elites, it also encourages person-to-person dialogue. This is a crucial and profound difference: Digital media does not simply speed up the call and response between leaders and the led; it generates an entirely new ecology of conversations that allows for not only vertical, but also *horizontal* dialogue. Instead of looking up for guidance, people can look side-to-side — to one another — for solutions. It encourages us to think locally, from the bottom up, and even individually.

That's what is really meant by *social* media. The easiest way to remember how digital media really works is simply to look at your 10 fingers. Digital technology brings media back into our own hands. We are no longer merely consumers of media: We are media producers. And the preferred subject of the smartphone's hand-held camera tends not to be what is happening elsewhere, but what is happening locally.

Now that our friends can tweet as loudly as any brand, our local reality is as well represented in our media — our digital media — as any government or corporation. Where our attention used to be won by whoever controlled our broadcast channels, now it is won by whoever is saying something relevant to our lives. This restores our connection to the local, the civic, the social and human. Living digitally, we tend to function on a scale more compatible with our identities as individual people, parents, workers or community members. The real world of our peers emerges as much more substantial and meaningful than the artificial world projected by global institutions. This is why activism spawned by digital media — from the Arab Spring to the True Finn party to the anti-capitalist movements of Spain — is so locally focused, organized and motivated.

### Local Impact, Global Proportions

The last time a shift of this magnitude occurred was when the printing press culture of the book gave way to the satellite-driven culture of global television. But instead of national interests giving way to McLuhan's global village, the digital era has witnessed a shift of the media lens to the immediate and local. While traditional electronic media pushed us all toward more global activities and sensibilities in the latter half of the 20th century, digital media is pushing us quite the other way

©Rommel DeGuzman

Digital technology brings media back into our own hands, transforming us from media consumers to media producers.

in the 21st. It encourages us to think locally, productively — even individually — from the bottom up. If we do not recognize this essential shift, we will remain powerless to understand, much less influence, the events occurring in our new, digitally inspired civil society.

Digital media's potential for building civil society is considerable. Recent developments in connection technologies such as mobile phones and social networking platforms have revolutionized the way we share information, communicate, organize and advocate for our interests. These developments have the ability to strengthen civil society where it already exists — and to foster it where it does not. By reducing barriers to information production and distribution, millions of new media producers and consumers are able to organize, communicate, learn and participate in their countries and communities with unprecedented efficiency. With digital technologies in hand, formerly voiceless individuals are empowered to participate in the public sphere and expand the diversity of available ideas.

## Civil Society in the Digital Age

The future, however, is not all rosy. For digital media to reach its full potential as a tool for civic action, the responsibility — as with all tools — falls on its users. Technology alone solves nothing. The successful employment of digital media for the betterment of civil society will require not only the energy and skills of well-intentioned producers, but also careful, critical and digitally savvy consumers.

To successfully navigate this new media environment, policymakers, strategists, nongovernmental organizations and governments must resist the temptation to operate and communicate through the now-obsolete model of the global village, and reckon with the local, bottom-up and contagious ecology of tweets, Facebook messages, and Foursquare updates.

The people have been left to their own devices. ■

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© AP Images/Lefteris Pitarakis

Tunisian blogger Wissem Zghaier types on his laptop at a café in downtown Tunis.

Digital devices such as mobile phones do not bring about social change. Ensuring digital technology is used for the betterment of society depends on those who use it.

© AP Images/Wong Maye-E

# New Rules for a New Game: How to Be a Team Player in the Age of New Media

Dan Gillmor

Never has so much information been available to so many people. And never has it been more challenging to sort it all out.

© Jeff Huang/Getty

© David Brabyn/Corbis

Co-founders of social media platform Foursquare, Naveen Selvadurai (left) and Dennis Crowley, work in their airy New York office. Using digital media requires learning new skills.

The 21st century is a time of media abundance, an era of radically democratized and decentralized creation and distribution. Almost anyone can publish and almost everything published can be found.

However, information abundance can lead to information confusion. For some the influx of new information sources may feel like an overload. The proliferation of new media outlets over the past decade has created a deluge of data whose trustworthiness cannot be easily judged. Although no media outlet has ever been a perfect source, deciding whom to trust in today's oversaturated market is more difficult than ever.

## Media By the People

New information sources are arising from the democratized world of what I call "citizen media." By "democratized" I refer not so much to voting, but rather to participation; anyone with access to modern technology such as a mobile phone or computer can now participate in media. Individuals and groups around the world are using new media creation tools to produce their own content independent of traditional media production channels. The potential of citizen media is tremendous and its impact is already showing. For example, citizen media played a key role in the recent Middle East and North Africa uprisings. In more stable regimes it has enabled a profusion of information on issues and topics rarely if ever covered by traditional media.

However, not all information is created equal. The more atomized the media become, the more unreliable information — or worse, total fabrication — makes its way into what we read, listen to and watch. Accuracy, quality and reliability can vary greatly from one source to another. In this era of prolific media production, responsibility falls not only on producers to create quality material, but also on consumers to navigate the new media sphere responsibly. In order to realize democratized media's full potential, consumers must first be able to discern the good from the bad and ugly.

While sorting though the cascade of new media content may seem daunting, we aren't helpless. A variety of tools and techniques are emerging to help us evaluate new information streams from the very collision of technology and media that created them. However, the most effective tools available are not technological. Rather, our intellect, curiosity and willingness to follow ethical and intellectually sound principles are our most powerful assets when assessing information in today's media environment.

Democracy is not just about voting. In democratized media, participation is vital. We must learn to use media by becoming active participants in the way we consume and create our own trusted information. This is a modern version of what has been called "media literacy," and it has never been more important. (See sidebar on page 20 "Fundamentals of Media Literacy.")

## Responsibilities in the New Media Ecosystem

If a radio announcer has political ties to a particular party or government agency, that fact should be clear to the listeners. If pending legislation will affect a newspaper owner's business interests, those interests should be disclosed when the paper covers the legislation.

All media creators should explain how they operate, thereby increasing audience trust.

The emerging media ecosystem is an exciting, if frequently confusing, world for all of us. But its promise is as limitless as the supply of information it generates.

In this new world, we all have responsibility for ensuring the demand for quality and trustworthy information remains high. Self-government relies on our ability to weigh facts and make sound decisions. The world of new media — if we use it wisely — will enhance our ability to do exactly that. ■

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*The opinions expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. government.*

Creative Commons/Shashi Bellamkonda

An employee of community-based news platform Patch works in a coffee shop. Citizen journalists can help tell local stories overlooked by traditional media outlets.

# Fundamentals of Media Literacy

Dan Gillmor

Creative Commons/Tactical Tech/Samah Arafat

International NGO Tactical Tech hosts a workshop in Jordan teaching women's rights advocates how to represent information visually using digital madia.

The fundamental principles of media literacy provide essential guidelines for being an active media consumer in today's participatory media:

• **Be Skeptical of Everything**: Even the best journalists, not to mention our friends and colleagues, occasionally tell us things that are wrong. We cannot assign absolute trust in anything.

• **Exercise Judgment**: Don't be equally skeptical of everything. We give much higher credence to an article from a reputable publication such as the *New York Times* than a random comment on a random blog.

• **Open Your Mind**: We all need to go outside our comfort zones in our media consumption. This means reading and listening to people we disagree with. It also means actively seeking out information about unfamiliar peoples and cultures. And it especially means challenging our own beliefs and biases, no matter how closely held. People who don't occasionally alter their opinions based on new facts are people with closed minds.

• **Ask Questions**: The more important a topic is to our own lives, the more important it is to research it widely. One source is never enough. If the topic is close to home, we can — and should — ask our own questions of people who may have answers. For example, if a local newspaper's coverage of an issue in our neighborhood is incomplete, we can and should query our local contacts to get the missing information and communicate it to our neighbors who may also be interested or affected.

• **Learn Media Techniques**: More and more people own or have access to computers, and millions more are carrying phones and other mobile devices that can take pictures and videos. These are tools of media creation, and we should learn to use them accurately, productively and credibly. Moreover, we need to understand how media are used to persuade and to manipulate in order to be effective and responsible consumers.

The first four principles of media creation are, for the most part, journalistic: thoroughness, accuracy, fairness and independence. In this new era, we need to add another: transparency. Being transparent can take many forms. For example, we should recognize that everyone, and every organization, has a world view. Explaining that view to one's audience — so all content can be considered in context — is a critical service every responsible media producer should provide. ■

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# civil society 2.0

Katie Dowd

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*"We need to work toward a world in which access to networks and information brings people closer together and expands the definition of the global community. Given the magnitude of the challenges we're facing, we need people around the world to pool their knowledge and creativity to help rebuild the global economy, to protect our environment, to defeat violent extremism, and build a future in which every human being can live up to and realize his or her God-given potential."*

—U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, Washington,D.C., January 21, 2010

Supporting the expansion of the organizations and networks that constitute civil society has long been a goal of the U.S. State Department. Civil society is instrumental to the advancement of democracy, transparency, respect for human rights and good governance; it makes communities more prosperous and stable, encourages mutually sustainable economic growth and pushes political institutions to be agile and responsive to the people they serve.

As the world evolves and technology is increasingly used to build and sustain social networks and avenues for communication, we recognize that it is critical to ensure that all civil society organizations can use these new tools to advance their missions in the 21st century. As part of what Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton calls 21st century statecraft, the United States is expanding the reach of traditional government-to-government diplomacy by using new technologies and engaging the networks they create.

Connection technologies such as mobile phones, mapping applications, and social networking software create new opportunities for civil society groups to advance their work. Unfortunately, in an increasingly networked world, some civil society organizations are getting left behind. To ensure that even the smallest civil society organization can access and use connection technologies, Secretary Clinton announced the Civil Society 2.0 initiative in Marrakech, Morocco, in 2009.

Civil Society 2.0 is designed to help small organizations that work for the social good to increase their capabilities by using connection technologies. The goal is to create a long-term, self-sustaining network of technologists, volunteers and civil society advocates dedicated to promoting the work of civil society in the 21st century.

Courtesy photo/Andri Setiawan

A TechCamp participant works on his iPad. Connection technologies like tablet computers are creating new opportunities for civil society groups to advance their work.

In May 2011, TechCamp Jakarta convened technology experts and civil society organizations to brainstorm on how to address global challenges using digital media.

Courtesy photo/Andri Setiawan

Courtesy photo/Andri Setiawan

TechCamp participants Nawang, Firzi, Melly, Tika and Titi pose in the high-tech @america Center in Pacific Place Mall, Jakarta, Indonesia.

To achieve this goal, we are bringing together technology experts and on-the-ground civil society practitioners through TechCamps, two-day events in which we pair experts in the technology community with civil society organizations to help participants harness the latest connection technologies and further the goals of their mission.

Unlike traditional conferences, TechCamps emphasize hands-on training and interaction. A majority of the time is spent in small groups, allowing organizations to concentrate on their unique challenges and collaborate with technology experts to determine the best technical solutions. TechCamps also offer technologist-led, interactive training sessions that teach participants how to use tech-based tools to advance their work. Examples include how to build a website, engage in social media, develop a mobile application, as well as raise money and search for volunteers online.

Another unique feature of TechCamps is that the collaborations they foster continue once participants have gone home. After the event has ended, participants share solutions to problems and discuss progress on *www.techcampglobal.org*, a website that connects to global networks of digital volunteers interested in helping civil society organizations. In this way, TechCamps are fostering an ongoing community for civil society organizations and technologists to share outcomes, successes and needs, thereby strengthening the program's effectiveness and sustainability.

We have hosted four TechCamps in Chile, Indonesia, Moldova and Uruguay and have trained some 250 civil society organizations from more than 35 countries on issues ranging from disaster response to open government. With more TechCamps planned, our TechCamp community is growing into a worldwide network positioned to foster and support individuals and organizations working to improve their societies. ■

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# Connecting Technology and Civil Society

Ashley Rainey Donahey

Civil society groups are using connection technologies to manage natural disasters, combat corruption and empower people.

Creative Commons/Tactical Tech/Samah Arafat

When opponents of Egypt's Hosni Mubarak regime took to the streets of Cairo in early 2011, they turned to technology to coordinate their efforts. Using the Internet, mobile phones, and social networking sites like Facebook, hundreds of thousands of protestors converged on Tahrir Square and succeeded in ending Mubarak's 30-year presidency.

Facebook, Twitter, SMS and other connection technologies did not start the movements that toppled regimes in Egypt and Tunisia earlier this year, but by enabling citizens to communicate and organize they played a key role in their success. Recent technological developments provide a veritable arsenal of new tools to help people share information, communicate opinion, organize and advocate for their interests.

In short, technology alone solves nothing, but when deployed by individuals and organizations working for social change, technology can be a powerful ally. And while technology alone cannot bring about social change, connection technologies hold tremendous potential to foster and strengthen civil society.

## Human Challenges, Technical Solutions

Every day, individuals and civil society organizations around the world use connection technologies to change lives and improve their communities in quieter ways than deposing dictators. For example, PopTech, a multidisciplinary network exploring the social impact of new technologies, recognized that many South Africans fear being shunned by their communities if they test positive for HIV, so they avoid getting tested. To counter this fear, PopTech launched an innovative mobile-based program called Project Masiluleke, which allows people to get their test results anonymously via text message. Rates of identification and treatment for HIV carriers in South Africa have increased — and Project Masiluleke's creative use of mobile phone technology made it possible.

The uses of connection technologies are limited only by the ingenuity of their users. Perhaps the ultimate example of an organization exploiting technology's adaptability for the betterment of civil society is the nonprofit technology company Ushahidi.

Named for the word "testimony" in Swahili, Ushahidi began in 2008 as a website for mapping post-election violence in Kenya. The original website evolved into a free, open-source software platform that collects information from a variety of connection technologies, including SMS, email, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Flickr, and plots it on an interactive map. Individuals and civil society groups around the world now use Ushahidi to advance a wide variety of social, political and environmental causes.

For example, a newspaper in southern China maps environmental degradation in Hong Kong, Louisiana residents mapped the Gulf oil spill's impact on their communities, and an African health campaign maps availability of essential medicines in local facilities across Africa. One man used Ushahidi during the 2010 Russian wildfires to connect thousands of volunteers with thousands of victims in need.

©KHALED EL FIQI/epa/Corbis

Former Google executive Wael Ghonim addresses a crowd in Cairo's Tahrir Square with mobile phone in hand. Digital technology helped dissenters organize protests in Egypt and Tunisia in spring 2011.

Previous page: Participants at Tactical Tech's 2010 workshop, "Visualising Women's Rights" collaborate using a laptop. The workshop brought together 44 women's rights advocates in the Jordanian desert for three days of training in the use of digital media for advocacy.

© AP Images/Ben Curtis

Bedouins from North Sinai sing and clap during the 2011 Cairo demonstrations, as onlookers hold up mobile phones and cameras. Though technology helps, people are still the drivers of social change.

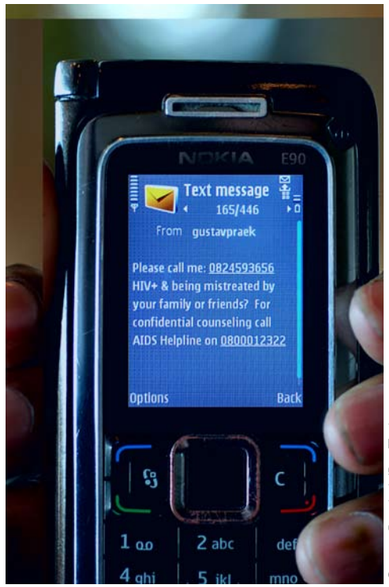
## Technology as Tool, Not Panacea

More and more people around the world own or have access to computers, and millions more now carry phones and other mobile devices that can capture and transmit pictures, audio and video. To exploit the full potential of these technologies as tools for enabling and fostering civic action, people must use them skillfully, productively and credibly. Such technologies can facilitate social change, but not create it. People are still in the driver's seat.

The civil society organizations described in the following pages are deploying connection technologies creatively and responsibly to foment positive changes in their communities. ■

*Ashley Rainey Donahey is a managing editor of* eJournal USA.

**What do you care about?**
See inside back cover and tell us!




Gustav Praekelt/PopTech

Project Masiluleke has sent more than 1 billion text messages like this one to help curb the spread of HIV/AIDS in South Africa.

"By relying on mobile phones, mapping applications, and other new tools, we can empower citizens and [...] address deficiencies in the current market for innovation."

*—Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton*

CASE

# Digital Solutions to Natural Disasters

*Connection technologies aided relief efforts in Russia, Japan and Pakistan.*

STUDIES

©Associated Press/Mikhail Metzel

## USHAHIDI HELPMAP
Russia

© AP Images/Alexander Zemlianichenko

As wildfires ravaged Russia's forests in July 2010, Russian bloggers discussed ways average citizens could help quell the fire and aid victims.

In 2010 when wildfires began spreading from deep within Russia's forests toward more heavily populated urban areas, what began as an unusually hot and dry spring turned into a deadly summer. Firefighters' struggle to contain the blaze ignited the Russian blogosphere with discussion of how average citizens could help.

On a LiveJournal community website called *Pozar Ru*, launched as a place to post reports of fires and alert at-risk communities, blogger Gregory Asmolov suggested that the online mapping platform Ushahidi could be used to coordinate emergency efforts. Asmolov's post was quickly republished by other prominent bloggers entreating volunteers to use Ushahidi, and Asmolov enlisted his colleague Alexey Sidorenko to help him launch the project. Asmolov and Sidorenko had a website with the Ushahidi platform running within the day. To spread the word Asmolov reached out to newspapers and radio stations, and prominent Russian TV station Channel 1 picked up the story of the first ever Ushahidi implementation in Russia.

One particularly innovative aspect of the Russia HelpMap was that its main purpose was not only to map reports of fires, but also to connect individuals in need with volunteers who want to help. HelpMap was designed with categories such as "What is needed" and "I wish to help" with complementary subcategories like "I need evacuation" and "I have transport."

Not all the work was done online, however. To coordinate, map and verify reports, volunteers organized a call center within a volunteer's apartment. By the time the fires ceased, HelpMap had received more than 187,000 unique visitors and 1,600 messages. At the peak of the crisis, 17,000 people visited HelpMap in a single day. In recognition of HelpMap's overwhelming success, the Russian Federal Agency of Press and Mass Communication granted the project the national Runet Award, commonly nicknamed "the Internet Oscar."

Since the volunteer force disbanded, Asmolov has been travelling around Russia giving lectures to university students, NGOs, and government officials on the potential of new technologies to improve the work of both civil society and government. Russian blogger *grey-wolk* described the lessons learned from HelpMap this way: "It turned out that a combination of active people, the newest technologies of distributed work, the lack of formal restrictions and unlimited source of knowledge on the Internet leads to a situation when this relatively small 'virtual' working group is able to carry out operations that make a real impact on a huge territory."



## ROOMDONOR.JP
Japan

© AP Images/Ichiro Ohara

Lanterns lit in honor of the March 2011 disaster in Tohoku, Japan, float downriver. Some 20,000 people were killed and 7,000 evacuated due to the earthquake and tsunami.

When a massive earthquake rocked Japan on March 11, 2011, Keio University sophomore Kohei Fukuzaki evacuated his friend from the Pacifico Yokohama Convention Center where hundreds of people were stranded. That day as Fukuzaki scanned websites like Twitter and Facebook for information, he got an idea.

He noticed that friends and strangers alike were offering up their homes to victims who could not return to their own. So Fukuzaki enlisted a couple of his classmates in launching roomdonor.jp, a website that matches victims in need of rooms with people offering rooms for free.

Already familiar with cloud sourcing and social sharing from Internet media such as American-based *TechCrunch,* Fukuzaki and his friends were able to tailor their website for the disaster. "We devised a way to make using these services even easier, so that it will be the best method, even in the middle of an earthquake," Fukuzaki says. Roomdonor.jp is searchable by region, number of people, accommodations for pets and children, and is available via mobile devices.

Within its first week, more than 2,000 rooms were offered on the website. Traffic spiked on April 12 when U.S. Ambassador to Japan John V. Roos tweeted about it and 250 more people registered their available rooms. estimates that several hundred earthquake victims have been sheltered through roomdonor.jp and reports that as of August 2011, the website is prepared to make arrangements for about 7,000 accommodations.

## Télécoms Sans Frontières
Pakistan

Courtesy Photo: Télécoms Sans Frontières

Télécoms Sans Frontières advertises a temporary telecommunications center offering free phone calls during the 2010 floods in Pakistan.

Many Pakistanis' worst nightmares came true in 2010 when torrential rains caused the worst floods in Pakistan's history. Entire villages and their inhabitants were swept away in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh provinces. Télécoms Sans Frontières (Telecom Without Borders), a global NGO specializing in emergency telecommunications and technologies, was quickly on the scene.

TSF helped end the agony of tens of thousands of people who did not know whether their loved ones were dead or alive by providing free wireless telephone services. Armed with satellite and mobile phones, teams of two spread throughout affected districts, alternately setting up phoning centers and meeting victims in tents and classrooms. Between August 20 and September 28, 2010, TSF enabled 13,480 stricken families to make contact with loved ones inside and outside Pakistan.

"It means that more than 94,000 people were reconnected throughout the world thanks to a simple phone call," TSF says.

TSF also used its linkages to strengthen coordination and support initial assessments with the U.N. Disaster Assessment and Coordination teams in Punjab as well as the U.N. Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Islamabad.

The value of its work can be felt through the stories of the flood victims, such as that of Farid, who lived in a village outside Peshawar with his wife and 10 children, three of whom were lost in the rampaging waters. As recounted on the group's website, "he lost everything: his children, the home he had built for his family, the dreams he had for his children. … Thanks to the TSF/YRC [Youth Resources Center of Pakistan] teams, Mr. Farid could contact his relatives living in Lahore." Since 1998, TSF has been active in all continents responding to natural and human disasters soon after they happen. ■

Courtesy Photo: Télécoms Sans Frontières

A Télécoms Sans Frontières (TSF) volunteer stands by as a man calls his family during the 2010 Pakistan floods. TSF enabled more than 13,000 families to connect with loved ones.

"Access to information helps citizens hold their own governments accountable, generates new ideas, encourages creativity and entrepreneurship."

*—Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton*

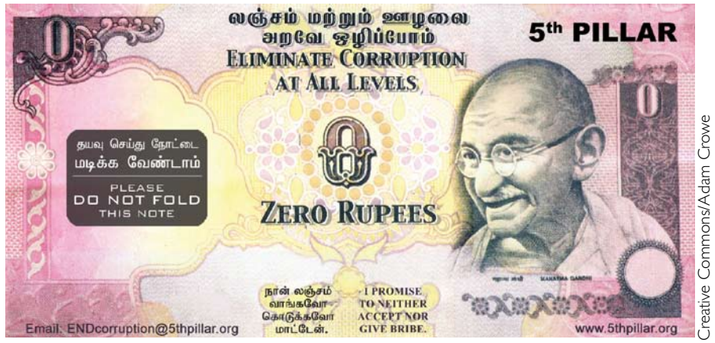
CASE STUDIES

# Combating Corruption

*Civil society promotes transparency using technology in India, Slovakia and the United States.*

© AP Images/Channi Anand

## Zero Rupee Note
India



Creative Commons/Adam Crowe

Vijay Anand's Zero Rupee Note is designed to resemble a 50-Rupee note and is inscribed with the words "I promise to neither accept nor give a bribe" in English and Tamil.

Returning home after starting his own technology firm in the U.S., Vijay Anand was appalled by the corruption in his home state of Tamil Nadu, India. Unwilling to continue the common practice of bribing officials to perform supposedly free, everyday services, Anand founded 5th Pillar, an NGO aimed at empowering Indian citizens to defy and eliminate corruption. Using image-editing software and a website for promotion and distribution, Anand created a powerful weapon to defend citizens from bribe-soliciting officials: the Zero Rupee Note.

The simple piece of paper with no monetary value, designed to look like a 50-rupee note, has proven to be a formidable deterrent to those who receive it. Many have reported that handing over the note emblazoned in English and Tamil with the words "I promise to neither accept, nor give a bribe" has resulted in prompt service and even provoked apologies from receiving officials.

For example, when an elderly woman seeking a land title she needed to send her granddaughter to college handed the Revenue Department official a Zero Rupee Note instead of the bribe he had requested, the official not only immediately granted her title, but also offered her his chair and brought her a cup of tea!

The Zero Rupee campaign has been so successful that in 2008, 5th Pillar launched ZeroCurrency.org, where anyone can download zero currency notes from 196 countries.

## The Fair Play Alliance
Slovakia

Nicknamed the most wanted watchdog in Slovakia, the Fair Play Alliance has brought a degree of transparency to Slovakia's often opaque public finances.

Fair Play's Zuzana Wienk and fellow activists started the Internet-based watchdog site in response to a national scandal concerning European Union funding for Slovakia after its entry into the EU in 2004. "Using Freedom of Information laws, we started to request more and more data about companies and ministers, also requesting invoices and other data," Wienk says. Their software application "Politikaopen" is the only public asset-disclosure tool available online in Slovakia and includes data from a number of high-ranking politicians including the prime minister and the chairman of Parliament.

Previous page: To avoid long lines for basic services, many in India resort to bribery. The Zero Rupee project hopes to eradicate such practices.

© AP Images/Manuel Balce Ceneta

Fair Play Alliance's financial disclosure tool, *Politikaopen*, tracks the personal assets of Slovakia's leaders, including Prime Minister Iveta Radicova.

At the height of the scandal, Fair Play Alliance was the third most visited website in Slovakia.

The open database tracks the flow of money through public institutions, government offices, political parties, members of parliament, judges, prosecutors, advisers to political leaders and others. The Fair Play website provides the most complete compendium of government finances available to the public.

Its work to date has inflamed enough public ire to bring about the enactment of numerous reforms in public finances and the resignation of one Slovak minister. Fair Play makes its software available to nonprofit groups free of charge on the condition that the software is used for noncommercial purposes. The Alliance also donated its technology to a group in the Czech Republic to establish a similar electronic watchdog and has trained civic groups in Ukraine, Montenegro, Serbia, Lithuania, Iraq and Bulgaria.

This year the U.S. Embassy in Slovakia awarded the Fair Play Alliance a grant for their project "Keeping Politics Accountable," which aims to mount public awareness campaigns surrounding public procurement fraud in Slovakia.

Courtesy photo/Russell Quinn

ProPublica's reporters use digital applications such as this free iPhone app to augment their news stories and enlarge their audience.

## ProPublica
United States of America

Investigative journalism is one of the most effective weapons of a free press against instances of corruption. Unfortunately, as the budgets of traditional media around the world shrink, so do the funds available for effective and powerful investigative reports. One U.S. news organization is hoping to turn that trend around.

ProPublica, an independent, nonprofit newsroom, is committed to providing hard-hitting journalism in the public's interest. ProPublica's mission is to "expose abuses of power and betrayals of the public trust by government, business, and other institutions, using the moral force of investigative journalism." Led by former editors at such prestigious publications as the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Times*, ProPublica has been amassing awards, including two Pulitzer Prizes, for its investigative journalism since it began publishing in 2008.

ProPublica uses the latest digital technologies and social media platforms to disseminate its stories. ProPublica makes most of its articles available online for reprint as long as the material is properly attributed, unaltered and not sold for profit. They also provide access to their stories via Facebook and Twitter, podcasts and a free iPhone app.

Many stories are augmented by data-rich "news apps" that break down relevant data into more easily understood components. One such app called "The Opportunity Gap" provides data from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights that allows users to find out whether their state provides students equal access to advanced courses.

ProPublica aims not only to call attention to the wrongs against the public, but to right them. "In the best traditions of American journalism in the public service, we seek to stimulate positive change." ■

"With digital technologies in hand, formerly voiceless individuals are empowered to expand the diversity of available ideas."

*—Douglas Rushkoff*

CASE STUDIES

# Media Mobilizes the Marginalized

*Civil society uses technology to change lives and improve communities in Africa, Asia and the Americas.*

Courtesy photo/ Internews

## HarassMap
### Egypt

© AP Images\Amr Nabil

HarassMap uses Ushahidi's online mapping application to collect and track women's anonymous harassment reports on an online map.

Sexual harassment is an extremely difficult offense to confront. Not only are its victims often reluctant to report it for fear of being blamed, the offenders frequently do not recognize their behavior as offensive. "If you're harassed as a woman, it's supposed to be your fault," said Cairo resident Rebecca Chiao in a recent interview for the *Toronto Star*. To combat this phenomenon, Chiao, a Pennsylvania native, recently co-founded an innovative project combining social media, digital technology and on-the-ground volunteers to advocate against sexual harassment in Cairo.

Called HarassMap, the project uses the online mapping platform Ushahidi to collect anonymous harassment reports via phone calls, text messages, tweets and web postings, which are then mapped onto a website according to the offense reported. Categories range from ogling and inappropriate comments to stalking, sexual assault and rape.

Women who make reports are given information on how to file police reports, seek psychological treatment and receive self-defense training. Business owners in high-frequency harassment areas are also consulted by volunteers on how to protect women in their neighborhoods.

Launched only weeks before Cairo's protests began in January 2011, HarassMap's volunteer force joined the crowds in Tahrir Square and recruited new members, with the result that half of HarassMap's volunteers are now male. Encouraged by the project's success, Chiao hopes to expand HarassMap to 10 additional countries this year.

## Project Masiluleke
### South Africa

Gustav Praekelt/PopTech

Project Masiluleke founder Zinhle "Zinny" Thabethe holds a mobile phone displaying one of the organization's text message alerts.

South Africa has the highest rate of HIV-positive people in the world. In some provinces, such as KwaZulu-Natal, infection rates top 40 percent. Only 10 percent of the infected population is receiving anti-retroviral (ARV) treatment, and of those 10 percent, more than 40 percent will cease treatment within two years of starting. Fortunately, there is one statistic that offers hope: Nearly 90 percent of South Africans have access to a mobile device.

In Zulu, "masiluleke" means "lend a helping hand," and that is precisely what Project Masiluleke's creators aimed to do when they initiated a program to combat the HIV/AIDS epidemic in South Africa using mobile phones. Called "Project M," the program seeks to overcome the stigma of HIV in South Africa through the anonymity of mobile phones.

In its first phase, Project M sent 1 million text messages a day encouraging recipients to get tested and treated. The messages include the number for the National AIDS Helpline and make use of a very popular service in South Africa called "Please Call Me" messages that prompt recipients to call back the sender.

Next, the group created low-cost, locally appropriate self-testing kits and encouraged their use by advertising their availability, explaining how to use them and offering information on how to seek treatment or prevent infection through voicemail and SMS.

Project M has sent an average of 1 million messages a day since its launch in 2008, tripled the rate of calls to South Africa's National AIDS Helpline and recently surpassed the 1 billion mark in call backs. The organizers are currently preparing to implement an additional feature that will remind patients via text message to take their medication and keep medical appointments.

## Cyber Car of Friendship
### Kyrgyz Republic

Courtesy Photo/Internews

The Cyber Car project taught Kyrgyz youth communication and advocacy skills, including how to use digital technology to report on issues important to them.

Although young people between the ages of 14 and 35 account for 48 percent of Kyrgyzstan's population, many Kyrgyz youth feel underrepresented and disenfranchised by their society and have occasionally become caught up in violence such as spring 2010's revolutionary protests and interethnic fighting. To give Kyrgyz youth a stronger voice, the Internews Network launched a series of seven week-long seminars across Kyrgyzstan in July 2010 to train 123 young activists in a variety of media skills, including new media communication, video production and website design.

With funding from the U.S. Embassy in Kyrgyzstan, the Internews program helped young participants launch their own websites, shoot video footage of important local events with handheld devices, and organize social advocacy campaigns for issues such as combating domestic violence, fighting corruption, and supporting orphaned children.

In May 2011, 18 of the program's most active participants convened for a 10-day trip around Lake Issyk-Kul from Bishkek to Karakol to shoot and produce video segments on important issues they witnessed along the route. Travelling on a bus dubbed the "Cyber Car of Friendship," participants also met with youth NGOs in the cities they passed through to show their videos and compare their experiences as youth from different regions of the country. At each stop, participants and local youth advocates addressed important issues such as unemployment, interethnic reconciliation, and the country's regional divide.

Although all participants have since returned home, they keep in touch via Twitter and a Facebook "Cyber Car of Friendship" community page.

Previous page: Two Cyber Car of Friendship participants sharpen their digital reporting skills in Kyrgyzstan.

## PROYECTO ACCESO TEC
## Central and South America

JUAN MABROMATA/AFP/Getty Images

Members of human rights organization Madres de Plaza de Mayo listen to the verdict for a cleric convicted of complicity in murder, torture and abductions under the 1976-1983 military dictatorship in Argentina.

Many legal systems in Latin America lack access to cutting-edge technologies. A U.S. law school located a few kilometers north of the U.S.-Mexican border is hoping to change this.

Since 1998 , California Western School of Law, based in San Diego, California, has run Proyecto ACCESO, a rule-of-law training and public education program. A Spanish acronym representing "Creative Lawyers Collaborating to Find Optimal Solutions," ACCESO has trained thousands of legal professionals in the Americas — from judges to public defenders to private lawyers and law enforcement agents — with the goal of strengthening rule of law in the region.

"We are moving legal systems from the darkness to the light, changing centuries of corrupt, opaque and inherently unfair criminal and other procedures," says Proyecto ACCESO director James Cooper, who believes that modern technologies can make the legal system in the Americas more transparent, accountable and accessible to all.

Using technology to better serve justice is at the heart of the program. ACCESO Tec, the technology branch of the program, aims to increase access to justice for all by designing and distributing cutting-edge legal technologies. Examples include a digital case registry, a case law management system and a handheld legal information device. ACCESO Tec trains law enforcement officials in Latin America to use computer forensics to probe corporate espionage, enquire into corruption and search for pirated materials. It also trains legal workers in how to use DNA evidence to free the wrongfully accused and convict the guilty. ■

Courtesy photo/James Cooper

In 2002 volunteers with Proyecto ACCESO Tec traveled by train from La Paz, Bolivia, to Arica, Chile, offering legal skill workshops to law students, prosecutors, judges and defenders.



# Additional Resources

**Books, articles and websites about civil society and new media**

© AP Images/Manoocher Deghati

A University of Helwan student looks at his mobile phone while painting the Al-Jazeera logo on a mural commemorating the Cairo demonstrations in spring 2011.

## Books and Reports

**Farivar, Cyrus**. *The Internet of Elsewhere*. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2011.

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**Gillmor, Dan**. *Mediactive*. San Francisco: Creative Commons, 2010.
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**Howard, Philip N**. "The Role of Digital Media." *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 22, no. 3 (July 2011), p. 35, 14 pages.

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**Rushkoff, Douglas**. *Program or Be Programmed: 10 Commandments for the Digital Age*. New York: OR Books, 2010.

**Shirky, Clay**. *Cognitive Surplus: Creativity and Generosity in a Connected Age*. New York: Penguin Press, 2010.

**Shirky, Clay**. *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing Without Organizations*. New York: Penguin Group, 2008.

**Shirky, Clay**. "The Political Power of Social Media: Technology, the Public Sphere, and Political Change." *Current*, vol. 552 (May 2011), p. 17.

**Sonvilla-Weiss, Stefan, ed**. *Mashup Cultures*. Vienna: Springer Verlag, 2010.

**Sunstein, Cass R**. *Going to Extremes: How Like Minds Unite and Divide*. New York: Oxford UP, 2009.

**Turkle, Sherry**. A*lone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*. New York: Basic Books, 2011.

**Zandt, Deanna**. *Share This!: How You Will Change the World with Social Networking*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2010.

## Websites

**Berkman Center for Internet and Society**
*http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/*

**Berkman Center for Internet and Society**. Youth and Media
*http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/research/youthandmedia*

**The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE)**
*http://www.civicyouth.org/*

**CrisisCommons**
CrisisCommons seeks to advance and support the use of open data and volunteer technology communities to catalyze innovation in crisis management and global development.
*http://crisiscommons.org/*

**Digital Media Mash Up**
The Digital Media Mash Up is a weekly newsletter focusing on digital media events, news and research from around the world.
*http://cima.ned.org/tools-and-resources/digital-media-mash*

**Tactical Technology Collective**
Tactical Tech is an international nongovernmental organization working in close collaboration with partners, usually human rights groups and local issue-focused NGOs, for social change and the potential of technology and effective information processes to contribute to it.
*http://www.tacticaltech.org*

## Featured Organizations

### *Managing Natural Disasters*

**Room Donor.jp**
Centralized disaster information including offers of and requests for accommodation for evacuees and people displaced by the events in Tohoku, Japan.
*http://roomdonor.jp/*

**Télécoms Sans Frontières**
Telecom Without Borders offers telephones to people in areas that are affected by natural disasters, conflict or famine.
*http://www.tsfi.org/*

**Ushahidi**
Ushahidi is a nonprofit tech company that specializes in developing free and open source software for information collection, visualization and interactive mapping.
*http://www.ushahidi.com/*

### *Combating Corruption*

**The Fair Play Alliance**
The Fair-Play Alliance is an NGO based in Slovakia that monitors political party finance in the country and promotes transparency in party financing and procurement.
*http://www.fair-play.sk/index_en.php*

**ProPublica**
ProPublica is an independent, nonprofit newsroom that produces investigative journalism in the public interest.
*http://www.propublica.org/*

**Zero Rupee Note**
This NGO works to encourage, enable and empower every citizen of India to eliminate corruption at all levels of society.
*http://india.5thpillar.org/front_page*

### *Empowering People*

**HarassMap**
HarassMap, a crowd-sourced way to monitor and protect women in Cairo, enables Egyptian women to take a stand against sexual harassment and abuse.
*http://harassmap.org/*

**Project Masiluleke**
Project Masiluleke uses mobile devices for the delivery of public health information reaching upwards of 1 million South Africans every day, helping connect them to care.
*http://poptech.org/project_m*

*The U.S. Department of State assumes no responsibility for the content and availability of the resources listed above. All Internet links were active as of October 2011.*

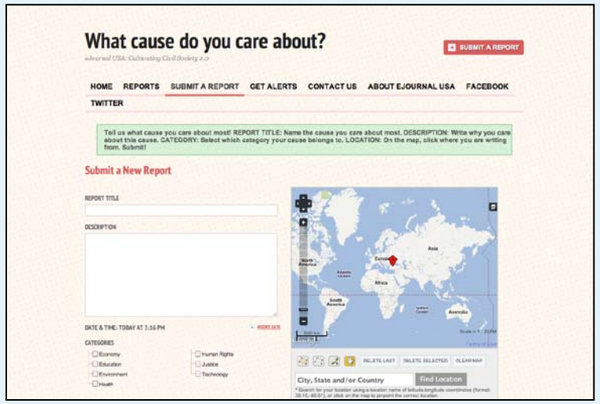


# What Do You Care About?

Tell *eJournal USA* what cause you are most passionate about!

## 1. Chart Your Cause!

Submit your report at *http://causemap.crowdmap.com/reports/submit.*




Scan with your mobile phone to go to *http://causemap.crowdmap.com/reports/submit.*

REPORT TITLE: Name the cause you care about most.
DESCRIPTION: Tell us more about your cause and why you care about it.
CATEGORY: Select the category your cause relates to.
LOCATION: On the map, click where you are writing from OR write your city and country in the box beneath the map, then click the red flag on the map to confirm your location.
Click Submit!

## 2. Who Cares About Your Cause?

Find people with similar interests at *http://causemap.crowdmap.com!*

Click on the categories in the box to find other people who care about your cause.

Use the navigation bar on the left side of the map to zoom in on any area.

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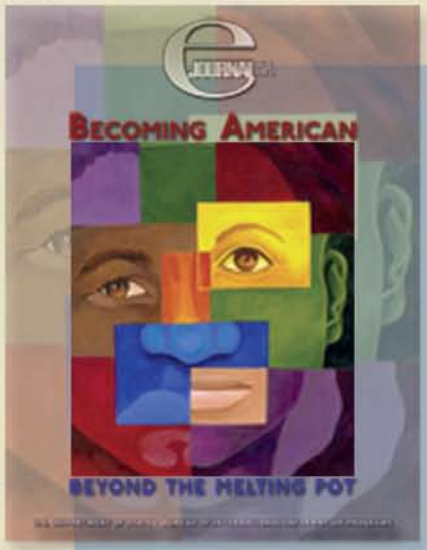

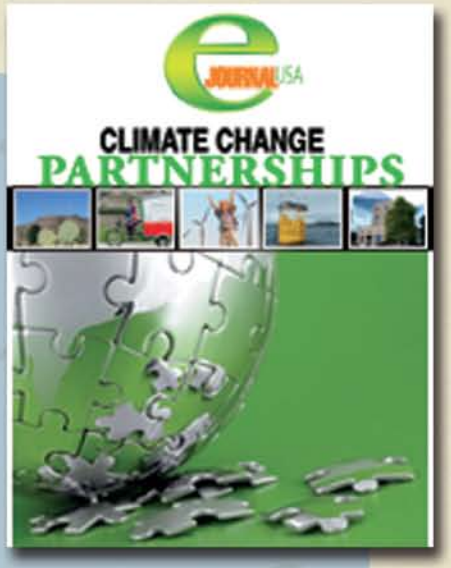

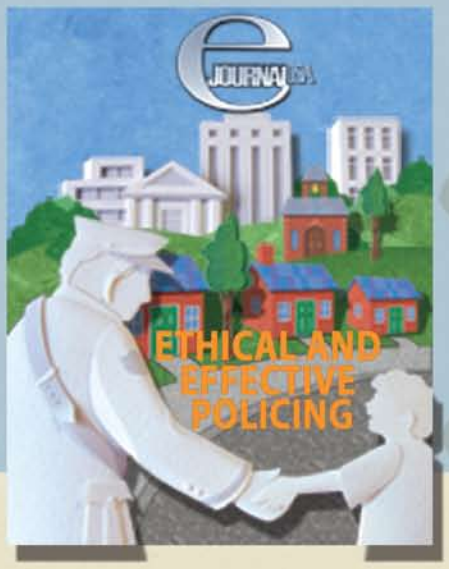

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